

# Fostering Forward

A monthly tip sheet to navigate through foster care

Taking care of a child who has experienced trauma can be overwhelming. It can be easy to put your own needs aside in order to make sure their needs are met. Here are some ways to keep your cup full and to help you make sure that your needs are being met, too.



**Self-Care**

## Why is Self-Care Important for Foster Parents

Being a parent is a lot of work, but being a foster parent comes with even more responsibilities such as court hearings, extra doctor appointments, therapy, coordinating visits with bio families, and scheduling visits with case managers. These added stressors, along with the unpredictability, vulnerability, and fatigue that can come with being a foster parent, can lead to compassion fatigue and burnout. By taking time for self-care and incorporating healthy habits, you can continue to give to others without taking a toll on yourself.



## Benefits of Self-Care

- Practicing consistent self care gives you the tools to **positively manage everyday stress**.
- Taking time to focus on your own needs sends a message that you matter, too, and will **discourage negative self-talk and enhance self-esteem**.
- Self-care activities are proven to activate your Parasympathetic Nervous System (PNS), which causes your body to go into a restful and rejuvenating mode and allows it to **strengthen your immune system**.
- Committing to self-care practices requires discipline and introspection, both of which help contribute to your **personal development**.
- Incorporating healthy and beneficial self-care habits such as exercise, meditation or journaling helps **eliminate negative coping mechanisms** from our lives.
- Knowing when to say “no” to things that will push you past your limits will allow you the time to focus on what you are already doing and will **increase your productivity**.
- Self-care gives you the resources you need to be compassionate to others. More self-care means **you have more to give!**

## Types of self care

**Sensory:** Sensory self care is all about calming your mind. Living in the present moment can help you let go of past resentments and future anxieties. Practice sensory self-care by taking a nature walk, sitting by a warm fireplace, taking a hot shower, focusing on your breathing, playing with a furry friend, or using essential oils.

**Emotional:** Facing emotions head on actually helps reduce stress. No emotions are “good” or “bad”, all that matters is how we act in response to these emotions. Practice emotional self-care by keeping a journal, making time to talk to a close friend or family member, or seeing a therapist even if just for a few sessions of personal growth.

**Spiritual:** Even if you are not religious, it is possible and important to practice spiritual self-care. This simply means finding ways to get in touch with your values and discover your sense of purpose. Practice spiritual self care by practicing meditation or mindfulness, attending a religious or humanistic service, reading poetry, or making a list of things you are grateful for.

**Physical:** Physical activity is not only vital for your health and well-being, but also helps to reduce stress! Physical self-care can be practiced in more ways than just going to the gym. Practice physical self-care by going dancing, doing yoga, going for a run solo or with friends, taking a nap, or doing a benefit walk.

**Social:** While this may look different for extroverts vs. introverts, connecting with other people at some level is essential and necessary for one's happiness. This can help prevent feelings of loneliness or isolation. Practice social self-care by having a lunch date with a friend, writing a letter to someone you miss, or joining a support group.

## Signs you need self care

- You feel underappreciated or undervalued.
- You put others' needs in front of your own.
- Your schedule does not include any time for yourself.
- Your to-do list is unrealistically long.
- You can't relax or slow things down.
- You don't have a support network.
- You think it's selfish to take time for yourself.
- You lack compassion for yourself.
- You feel you have to do everything and aren't able to delegate.
- Spirituality (whether it be yoga, meditation, prayer, or mindfulness) isn't a priority.



Now that you've learned the importance and benefits of self-care, are you ready to practice? Join us next month on **Saturday, July 13, 2019 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.** for a Self-Care Expo at Children's Hospital Community Services, and practice some of the tips we just discussed! RSVP to Meagan Bella at **MBella@chw.org** or at **414-897-6364**.